

ADDITIONAL FEE:

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R E M A R K S

The Office Action issued January 30, 2007 has been received and its contents have been carefully considered.

Applicant has amended the specification (the Substitute Specification filed 4/17/06) on line 8, to delete the words "of circular cross-section". Applicant has also deleted these words from claim 1, line 17, as required by the Examiner.

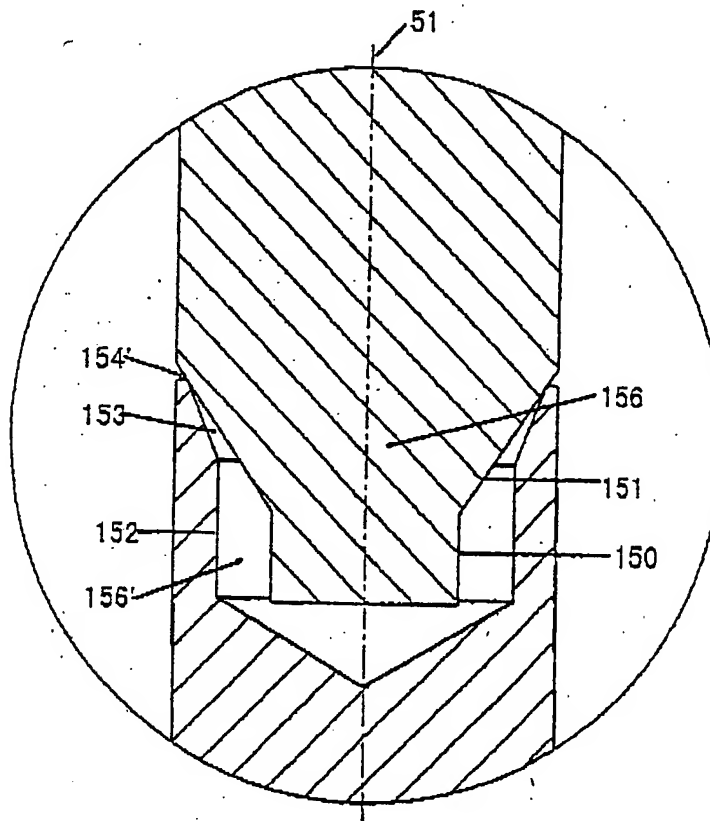
Applicant has also amended claim 1 to incorporate the subject matter of claim 20, and claim 20 has been canceled. Dependent claims 21 and 22 have also been canceled.

The phrases "the cylindrical rod" and "the connecting portion", which were objected to by the Examiner, have been changed to read "a cylindrical rod" and "a connecting portion", respectively, in the amended claim 1.

Claim 1, the only independent claim remaining in this application, now recites a ring binder mechanism having a plurality of rings for claspings sheets of paper, with each ring comprising a pair of "half ring elements" having free ends that form a "nesting configuration when in the closed

position." The free end of one half ring element of each pair has a "centrally concave nesting portion" and the free end of the other half ring element of the pair has a "centrally convex nesting portion".

The ends of the two half ring elements have the configuration shown in Fig. 8, which is reproduced below:



The convex nesting portion at the free end of the half ring element 156 has an annular conical surface 151 which extends directly to the outer surface of the cylindrical rod that forms this respective half ring element.

Stated in negative terms, the conical surface 151 does not terminate at its maximum outer diameter at a radially extending "edge", as is the case, for example, with the ring elements disclosed in the U.S. Patent No. 4,690,580 to Kissel.

As shown in Fig. 8, the concave nesting portion at the free end of the other half ring element has a "conical hole" shown as providing the conical surface 153 in Fig. 8. The maximum diameter of this conical hole is less than that of the cylindrical rod forming the half ring element 156. Further, the cone angle of this conical hole 153 is smaller than that of the cone angle of the annular conical surface 151. As a result, when the half ring elements are in the closed condition, as shown in Fig. 8, the internal conical end surface of the concave nesting portion engages with the external conical surface of the convex nesting portion, causing the convex nesting portion to nest centrally in the concave nesting portion.

None of the ring binder mechanisms taught in the prior art include pairs of half ring elements which are configured in the manner now recited in claim 1 (and as illustrated in Fig. 8) and engage with this "self-aligning" manner, whereby two conical surfaces, 151 and 153 interact to cause the

convex nesting portion to nest centrally in the concave nesting portion.



Set forth below are reproductions of various figures which show the free ends of the "half ring elements" forming the ring binders disclosed in the prior art:

U.S. Patent No. 4,690,580 to Kissel

Fig.2

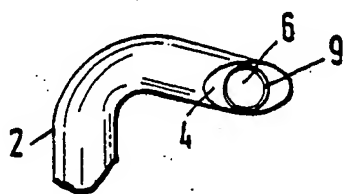


Fig.3

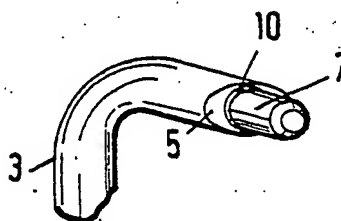


Fig.4

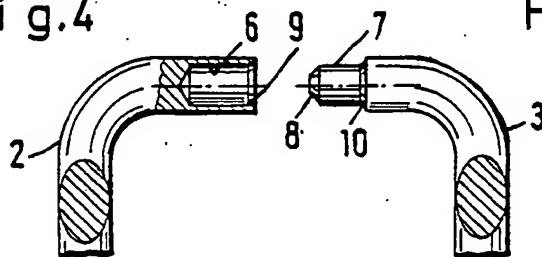
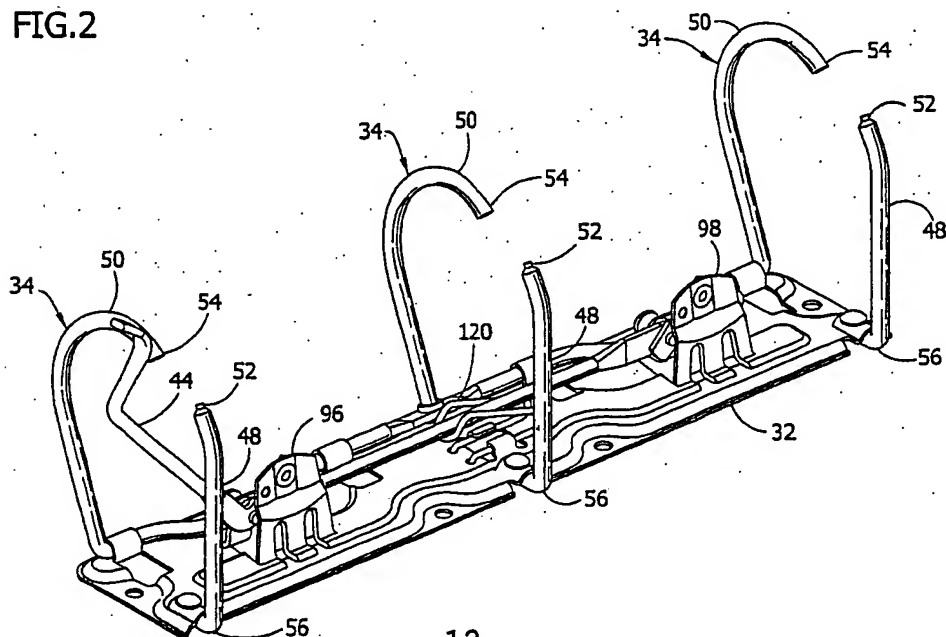


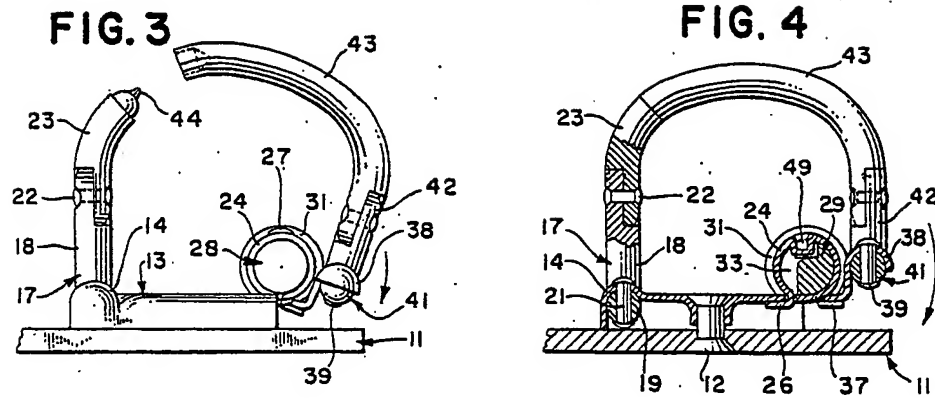
Fig.5

U.S. Patent Publication No. 2003/0044221 to To et al.

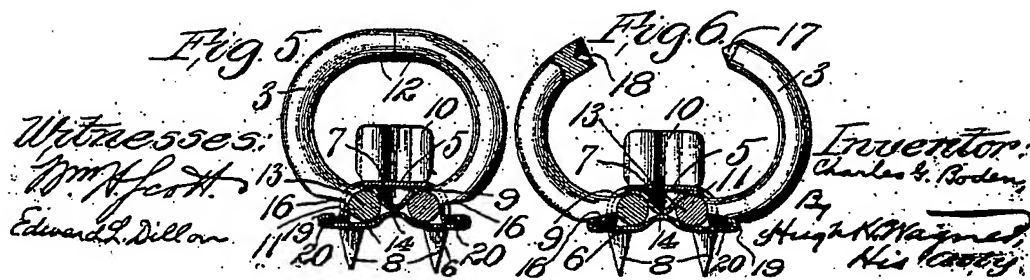
FIG.2



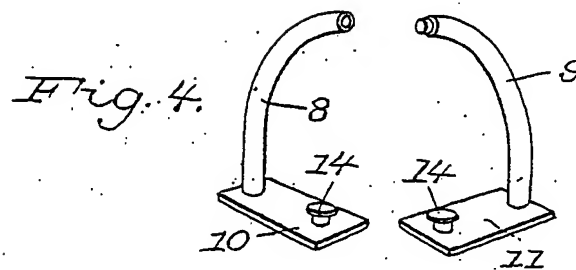
U.S. Patent No. 3,104,667 to Mintz

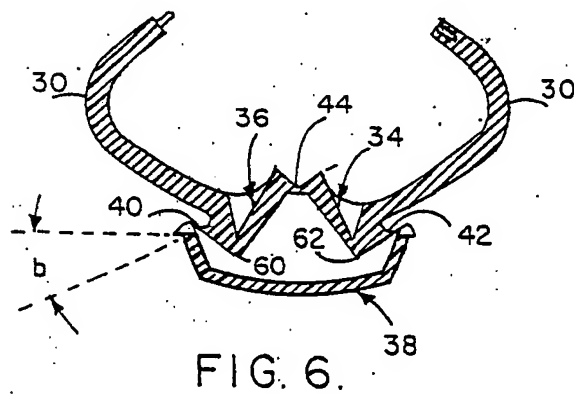
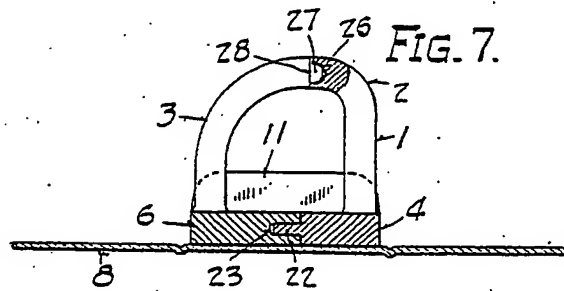
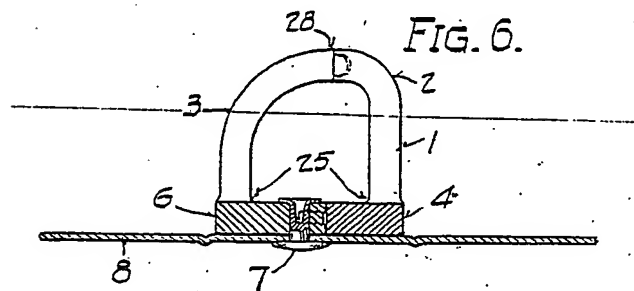
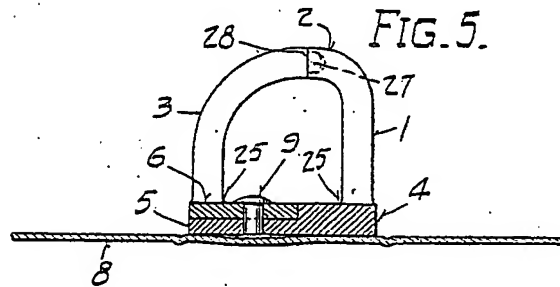
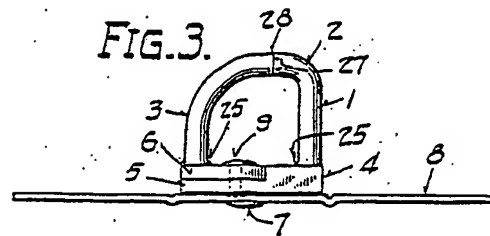


U.S. Patent No. 842,851 to Boden

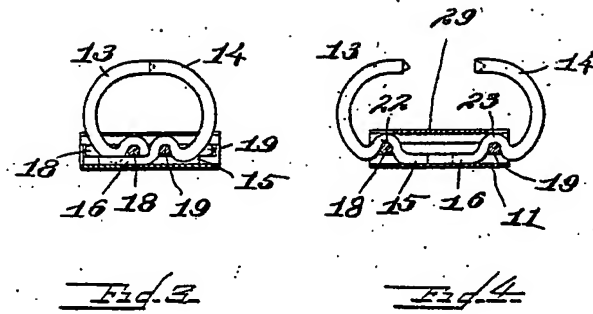


U.S. Patent No. 724,849 to Gresham





U.S. Patent No. 778,992 to Nelson



U.S. Patent No. 6,217,247 to Ng

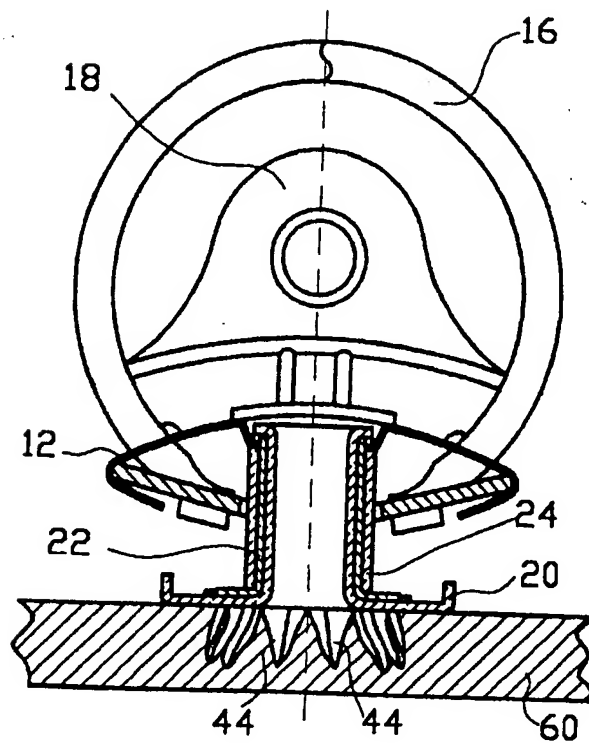


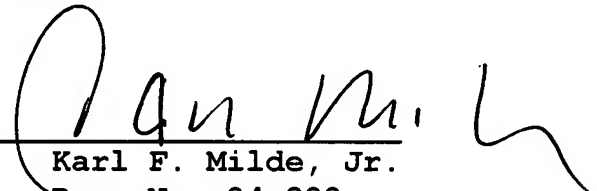
Fig. 7E

As may be seen, none of these ring binder mechanisms include the novel configuration at the free ends of the half ring elements which is now recited in applicant's claim 1 and disclosed in applicant's Fig. 8.

Accordingly, claim 1, as amended, the only independent claim remaining in this application, is believed to distinguish patentably over all of the references of record. Since all of the remaining claims depend, either directly or indirectly, from claim 1, they should also distinguish patentably over the cited references.

This application is therefore believed to be in condition for immediate allowance. A formal Notice of Allowance is accordingly respectfully solicited.

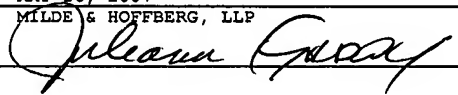
Respectfully submitted,

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MAY 16, 2007
MILDE & HOFFBERG, LLP
By 
Date MAY 16, 2007